

Blood bank levels often become critically low during the month of January. Hectic holiday travel schedules, the cold and flu season, and inclement weather often preclude individuals from donating at this time of year. However, the need does not decrease.

It is estimated that hospitals in our country use 39,000 units of blood per day. It saves the lives of nearly five million Americans who suffer from diseases like cancer, have had organ transplants, or have been involved in an accident. Currently, the blood inventory at Florida Blood Services is below a 2 day reserve for blood types O, A and B negative blood.

The general guidelines for donation are that a person be at least 16 years of age, weigh at least 110 pounds, have not donated blood within the last eight weeks, and be in good health. Donors also receive a brief examination at the time of donation to ensure that temperature, blood pressure, and blood count are within the appropriate range. Although only 37 percent of the population meets the blood donation criteria, it is estimated that only 10 percent of those eligible actually donate.

As we conclude this Holiday season, there may be one last gift to give: the gift of life. I encourage everyone who can to consider donating their blood. It takes only a few minutes, and we never know when someone we know and love may need this life saving procedure.

For more information about becoming a blood donor or to find a donation location call 1-800-68-BLOOD (25663) or log on to www.fbsblood.org.